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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: SENDERO THREATENS ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PARTNER COMMUNITIES

REF: LIMA 4784

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1. (SBU) Summary: Sendero Luminoso (SL) remnants in the Upper Huallaga have threatened five communities either to reject Alternative Development (AD) or suffer the consequences. This follows the kidnapping of AD USG contractors on 11/6 (reftel). Post is curtailing AD operations in the immediate area due to security concerns. End Summary.

SL Threats to AD Communities

2. (SBU) According to reliable field sources of USG contractor Chemonics, on 11/9 approximately 15 Sendero Luminoso (SL) members dressed in black and armed with short and medium range weapons entered the village of Hidayacu in the Shambillo-Boqueon Valley in the Province of Padre Abad of the Ucayali Department. Though no direct contact was reported, residents saw them and were intimidated by the armed presence. Subsequently, the SL column traveled to the town of Hormiga in the same valley where they told residents that any local or government leaders supporting the Alternative Development (AD) personnel in eradication would be punished. Both Hidayacu and Hormiga are graduates of the AD Program having voluntarily eradicated their coca and received development benefits.

3. (SBU) On 11/11, according to the Chemonics sources, approximately 15 members of the same SL column deployed to the villages of Rio Blanco, Rio Negro, and Shambillo Alto in the Shambillo Valley and made similar threats to residents regarding their support for the AD Program. Rio Blanco had historically rejected AD, however recently welcomed the program due to the viability of palm oil as an alternative crop. A notorious coccalero with sizable plots in the village, "Negro John", had even come around to accept the AD Program.

4. (SBU) The threats in the Shambillo Valley are believed to be by the same SL column that was involved in the Santa Rosa de Yanajanca kidnapping of AD contractors (reftel). The recent threats indicate that the SL members are now operating on both sides of the Huallaga River and crossing between the Huanuco and Ucayali departments. According to coccalero expert Jaime Antesana, SL freely travels this corridor from the Shambillo Valley to the Tingo Maria area.

Changing SL Tactics

5. (SBU) In the Upper Huallaga, evidence indicates SL is working with coccaleros to grow coca and infiltrate and co-opt communities. In the 11/6 Santa Rosa de Yanajanca kidnapping incident (reftel), members of the community were involved with SL in the abductions and questioning. The kidnapped workers had previously made an AD presentation to the community without incident. The community members had invited the AD workers back to the community only to ambush them with SL members, specifically targeting the AD Program.

6. (SBU) According to Antesana, in the Apurimac and Ene Rivers Valley (VRAE), SL are even more integrated in communities and into the narcotrafficking chain. (Note: Septel will detail the situation in the VRAE, the region in South-central Peru, separate from the Upper Huallaga, which is the other primary area of Sendero and coccalero activity. It is an area of intense coca cultivation where AD is operating in 66 communities, but has had little success beyond two districts. End Note.) Antesana said the SL temporarily lay down their arms to work the coca fields with the coccaleros. According to Antesana, in the VRAE SL has moved beyond growing coca and protecting transporters, to now processing coca paste and transporting coca and coca paste themselves.

GOP Response to Threats against AD Partners

17. (SBU) The victims filed a complaint with the Peruvian National Police (PNP) for robbery and assault, but were too frightened to report the incident as a kidnapping by armed SL members. Therefore, the PNP can take no action in the kidnapping case. The 11/6 kidnapping received very little press coverage initially and little public response from the GOP. Only on 11/18 when Congressman Luis Iberico Nunez President of the Defense, Internal Order, Alternative Development, and Counternarcotics Commission expressed concern to the press did multiple papers pick up the story. Iberico told the press he was concerned about the muted response by the GOP and said he would summon the Ministers of Interior and Defense to discuss the SL activities.

18. (SBU) Unlike the forced eradication team, which is protected by a contingent of DIRANDRO police, the cooperative, voluntary nature of AD work precludes the AD field team from traveling with police. Without a special escort, a permanent, authoritative state presence is necessary to ensure safety and order - this currently does not exist in the area in question. (Note: When USG AD employees travel to this area, they have a security escort. End Note.)

What We're Doing

19. (SBU) Given the threats to Chemonics employees, Post has decided to curtail operations in the disputed areas. USAID has prohibited Chemonics staff from entering the Rio Blanco area until further notice. Chemonics is focusing on achieving the 2005 voluntary eradication target, concentrating its efforts in non-conflictive areas of Ucayali and San Martin. Chemonics has taken the following near term security precautions: ceased all socializing and voluntary eradication activities in the Department of Huanuco north of Tingo Maria; halted all travel to communities in the disputed area; restricted use of project vehicles outside of Tingo Maria; and begun rotating staff involved in the kidnapping incident to other offices. Chemonics is no longer looking for AD opportunities in the disputed area.

110. (SBU) When Rio Blanco representatives heard that the AD Program was planning to halt operations there, they contacted CADA, the agency responsible for measuring and documenting coca and its eradication, and assured them of their safety. The community has decided not/not to heed the threats of the SL and to voluntarily eradicate their coca. Over the weekend of 11/19-20, the community voluntarily eradicated 70 hectares and expects to eradicate 80 more hectares by 11/24. The AD Program plans to eventually provide assistance to develop the palm oil sector and fix a road to assist in transport of their licit products to market.

Comment

111. (SBU) The kidnapping followed by the threats to important AD community partners significantly ups the ante for implementing our AD strategy in the area. Given the nature of the work and the lack of police presence in the areas, Post has little option other than to retreat our cooperative, voluntary AD Program from these disputed areas for the time being. These threats to the AD Program will be considered as we finalize the 2006 AD Strategy. Post plans to follow-up with forced eradication in the vicinity of the kidnapping next year.

112. (SBU) At the root of the problem is a lack of state presence in these areas creating a space for subversives to fill. The SL remnants with a relatively weak military presence (an estimated 150 members in the Upper Huallaga) are making the areas unsafe. Even in areas where the SL is not active (e.g., Polvora) the lack of a police presence permits a general unruliness where citizens on the street are armed and wild-west-style justice is accepted. This problem is compounded by the lack of vocal allies other than Iberico in defense of the AD program.

113. (SBU) The kidnapping and threats provide troubling evidence of the intensifying links between SL and cocaleros. Post will continue to closely monitor SL's activities to determine if the kidnapping was a defining moment in SL's strategy and if we can expect an escalation of the threats. End Comment.
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